CHRIST'S KINGDOM ON EARTH: A SELF-EXPANDING MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

A DISCOURSE

FOR THE

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS;

PREACHED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, N. Y.,

MAY 6, 1855.

BY THE REV. STUART ROBINSON,

MINISTER OF THE CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BALTIMORE, MD.

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"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

"Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."—Matthew xiii. 31, 32.

The one theme of the entire series of parables which the evangelist here groups together—as, indeed, of all the parables of Jesus—is "The Kingdom of Heaven"—the new spiritual community on earth, foretold by all the ancient prophets, foreshadowed in the ancient kingdom of David, until the sceptre departed from Judah, and now announced by John the Baptist as at hand. In these successive parables are exhibited, as in the revolving of a divinely-formed kaleidoscope, successive variations of the same elementary truths concerning the kingdom, constantly re-arranging themselves, and crystallizing into new forms of beauty.

It would of itself furnish edifying matter for a discourse, merely to educe the significant truths enfolded in the incidental imagery of this parable. To show how "the kingdom of heaven" must be a growth from remarkably small beginnings, to marvellously great results; rather than start up full grown, as did the "tree whose seed was in itself," at the bidding of Omnipotence, on the third day. Or how, in the flocking of the birds of heaven to feed upon the seeds of the tree and rest in its boughs, is shadowed forth the sustenance and the refuge which the kingdom of heaven—the church, with her ordinances and discipline—offers to the wandering sinners of every age. It would furnish a still wider field of discourse to trace the logical relations between the idea of the kingdom of heaven in this parable, and the ideas in those which precede it. To compare this picture with that of the origin of the kingdom in the sowing of seed, of which but one part out of

four proves effectual; with the second picture of the additional discouragement of the tares sown even among the efficient fourth part of the seed; and with the third picture—more cheering to faith—of the all-pervading power of the new life of the kingdom, even though silent and unseen as the hid leaven in its working. Or again, it would furnish most edifying matter of discourse, to compare the analogies chosen to represent the kingdom in this parable, with the similar analogies elsewhere in Scripture; as, for instance, the seed here hid in the field, with that seed to which Jesus afterwards compares himself when he declares, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit;"—and thence learn that this kingdom is an outgrowth, —an unfolding of the body of Jesus himself. Or again, to compare this mustard tree with the prophetic cedar tree which Ezekiel saw springing from the shoot cut from the old cedar; and thence learn the relation between the new kingdom of heaven and the ancient Israel of God.

Passing over these, however, I would invite your attention to the two leading and more general truths of the parable, as eminently appropriate to this occasion and this presence. The one of these truths is enfolded in the common but significant formula used to express the object compared, "the Kingdom of Heaven." The other is involved in the comparison itself, of this kingdom, in its outward manifestation, to the tree, shut up at first in the germinal seed, and tending ever to unfold and expand itself by the necessary law of its own inward life.

It shall be my aim, therefore, to set forth and illustrate,

I. The high relative importance given in the revealed scheme of Redemption, to the doctrine concerning Christ Jesus as a King—Founder and Head of a Community,—the Kingdom of Heaven.

II. The self-expansive nature of that kingdom; as manifest from Christ's own expositions of its nature and end—from the spirit of its citizens—from its ordinances and officers—and from its constitutional structure.

I. A clear apprehension of this truth, that Jesus Christ is a King—Founder and Head of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, is fundamental to any proper understanding, either of the spirit and language of the Scriptures, or of the nature and relations of the Christian life. Through the whole revealed scheme of Redemption, this truth runs parallel with the truth of the Priesthood of Christ. Nay, it is rather the essential form of that truth, and therefore the essential form of the Gospel itself. For "Christ crucified," according to the apostle, is not merely *a doctrine* contained *in* the Gospel; it is *the Gospel* itself; the one idea of all the revelation which God has made of himself. As in the physical structure of man, the blood, driven by the heart to every extremity of his system, imparts to every atom the vitality without which it would be only so much dead clay: so in the structure of God's revealed truth. The Cross of Jesus is the grand heart of the system, and the atoning blood flowing from the cross is that which imparts to every syllable its divine life as the truth of God. Every other idea in the book has its life from this idea; without this the other truths of Scripture may be fashioned, as men who love not the doctrine of atonement have fashioned them, into a beautiful system of Ethical Theology. But when their highest skill has been exhausted upon the work, it is no living gospel. It stands forth merely as the marble smitten by the wand of the genius of sculpture, beautiful indeed in form and structure, but a cold and lifeless thing—powerless to extend an arm to save, or speak a word of compassion to the fallen soul. So, on

the other hand, conversely—as the life-bearing blood in the physical system must needs have, as one of its conditions, the bodily structure and form—at once a condition and a result of the outworking of the life that is in it; in like manner, in the system of Redemption, the doctrine of atonement by blood must ever develop its life-giving power in the formation of a body of Christ—his Church—the Kingdom of Heaven.

With this general view corresponds the successive developments of the story of Redemption. It is ever the story of an atoning Redeemer, embodied in the story of a King of Glory. The very first shadowy glimpse of Messiah at the opening of Genesis, as the seed of the woman, in the prophetic promise to the two trembling sinners in Eden, is of a wounded but victorious king, crushing the head of the mighty arch-enemy of humanity. In the amazing history of the actual fulfilment of the prophecy, even as we behold him hanging on the cross; there, over his head is still the inscription, "This is the King of the Jews." In the last glimpse we catch of him through the door which John's prophecy opens in heaven, He is still "the King of kings, and Lord of lords;" "the Lamb in the midst of the throne," reigning in triumph over the myriads of his redeemed. And so in every stage of the revelation of God's purposes of mercy to the race. In the theology of Paul, the central truth is Christ risen and *reigning*, "till he hath put all enemies under his feet." The story of the evangelist is of him concerning whom the wise men and Herod inquired, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" at his birth; and concerning whom Pilate inquired, "Art thou a King, then?" on the day of his death. Going back to the revelations of Him through the prophets, He appears in every vision that was vouchsafed to encourage the faith of the saints, as at once the atoning Lamb that shall be led to the slaughter, but also as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. As the wailing sufferer "stricken of God," but also as the Holy King in Zion, who "shall divide the spoil with the strong."

If, in the institutions of Moses, Christ the priest was the one idea embodied in all the ceremonies and sacrifices of the altar and the tabernacle;—so the one idea of Christ the King was embodied in the very elementary principles of the civil and political constitution of the Commonwealth. Nay, not only in all the prophetic visions and prophetic legislation of the old dispensation, and in the formal theology of the new, is this idea of the Kingship of Messiah embodied as a theory, but not less clearly is it declared as an historical fact in the actual administration of the world's affairs. To the fact that Jehovah-Messiah was administering the typical, as a preparation for the real kingdom, the ancient sacred history attributes all the wonders and mighty works which it records. When Jehovah walked as a man with Abraham towards Sodom, it was Jesus the Mediator, assuming the form which in fulness of time he was to wear; symbolizing the union of Godhood and humanity which was to occur in the last days. When the bush glowed in the desert, it was with the presence of the Mediatorial King. When the voice spoke from the smoking mount, it was the voice of the King Messiah proclaiming the law, and speaking to the typical kingdom over which he ruled. On that mercy-seat in the Tabernacle—to the mere eye of sense a vacant throne—sat Jesus, the invisible sovereign, and from thence answered his loyal subjects when they came to inquire of the Lord. When visions of the Almighty fascinated the eye of the ancient seer; when a voice from the unseen held awake the ear of the ancient prophet; when the bared right arm of Omnipotence did many a mighty work of protection or of vengeance—it was all under the order and administration of Jesus the Mediatorial King, carrying on his preparation

for setting up his true and permanent kingdom. Nay, when at the bidding of feeble man, mighty Nature herself moved from her throne, and dropped from her trembling hand the sceptre, whilst she bowed in adoring awe and rejoicing welcome, as at the voice of her Lord and Maker;—it was because Jesus, the King of Zion, spake through these his humble brethren, and thereby prophetically manifested the dignity to which feeble humanity was to be exalted, in union with the person of him to whom "all things were put in subjection."

The faith of Christ's people can never loose its hold on the great truth of Jesus as King reigning among them, without an utter obscuring of the truth of Jesus as Prophet and Priest. Inseparable from practical experimental faith in him as our Daysman—our Priest to atone—our Substitute to provide us a righteousness—our Prophet to teach; must be this truth of Jesus our King ever manifest to our consciousness. For from this truth flows many of the most essential truths of "the life which we live by faith in the Son of God." To the eye of faith the whole universe unfolds itself in a view altogether foreign to the conception of the wise and prudent of this world. They rightly enough conceive that He "who made all things and upholdeth all things by the word of his power," is, therefore, by natural right, Lord of Creation. But even "babes" illumined by His Spirit, have a far more glorious and clearer conception of him, as they behold the administration of the universe in the hands of one who rules not merely by natural right, but as the "appointed heir of all things," and who is so appointed on the ground of some mysterious relation to humanity; who, therefore, though the Son of God, yet exercises his infinite power as the Son of Man!

It is therefore a great practical doctrine—that Jesus is not simply a Redeemer from sin, but the Founder and Head of a Kingdom. He has not only taught men a system of opinions concerning God, but instituted also, and rules over, a community. He hath given not simply a precept to be obeyed—a rule for the government of life—an opinion to be held by each individual separately—the body of his followers, like those of Socrates or Plato, combining merely by accidental agreement in opinion: far beyond all this, He hath constructed a Society; his followers are made members of a community with new social relations. To believe in Jesus is not merely the adoption of an opinion. The very act of faith whereby his followers receive his doctrine, unites them also to Him as members of his mystical body, and through Him to one another. They become a combination of men who are members of one spiritual body—brethren of one holy family And this is the Kingdom of Heaven.

II. We proceed next to consider what the parable teaches concerning the nature of this Kingdom; namely, that, by the very law of its being, the natural outworking of its life is in perpetual self-expansion.

In every investigation into the genius and spirit of a government, we naturally look first, if there be such, for some exposition of its constitution by the author or authors thereof. So, in this inquiry concerning a fundamental law of Christ's kingdom, we turn naturally first to his own expositions. And we shall find abundant sources of information on this head. For the exposition of the nature and laws of his kingdom may be said to be the chief burden of his discourses.

Among these we naturally turn first to the Parables; for they may be termed emphatically, Christ's discourses on the constitution of his kingdom. In more than one respect they are analogous to the disquisitions in the papers of the "Federalist" on the Constitution of the American Republic. For the parables are simply discourses in that form

touching the nature, the spirit, the agencies, and the aims, of the kingdom of heaven. Such, as already observed, is the purport of the six parables with which the text stands connected. They describe the origin, the agencies, the discouragements, the encouragements, the priceless value of the Kingdom of God. Another class of them--as the parables of The Publican, the Unmerciful Servant, the Two Debtors,—describe the spirit which must characterize the citizens of the kingdom, viz.: humility, love, the loyalty that flows from generous forgiveness, and which works out a spirit of forgiveness. Still another class, as the parables of the Two Sons—The Laborers in the Vineyard (by the very similes chosen)—the Great Supper—the Marriage of the King's Son—The Talents—The Pounds —The Good Samaritan ;—set forth the outworking of the true spirit of the kingdom in acts of service ; carrying out the King's purposes of love towards the outcast and ignorant, the poor and the suffering—the doing of good to man as man—both by personal labor and the devotion of treasures to the building up of the kingdom, and the relief of its citizens. Another class, again, as the parables of the Widow and the Judge—the Neighbor at Midnight—exhibit the supports to faith when laboring under discouragement, and hoping against hope. Whilst the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Prodigal Son, present the most glorious encouragements to work ;—in the dignity and grandeur of the results of that work, according to the estimate of God and all holy beings. And once more, another class are of terrible warning to all despisers of the great law of the kingdom, and the great purpose of its establishment. Thus, the parable of the Unjust Steward, inculcating the lesson, that even reasoning on principles of worldly expediency, the citizens of the kingdom should not be niggardly of their wealth. So the parables of the Barren Fig Tree, pointing out the doom of a mere fair show without fruit, of the Rich Man clothed in purple, and of the Rich Barn-builder, warning of the penalty of selfish disloyalty and covetousness. Whilst the parable of the Virgins gives solemn warning that all are under the rule of a King who may call at any moment for the rendering of an account. Thus the whole teaching of these wonderful forms of human thought is all to one and the same point, namely—the relation which all who receive the Gospel bear to Jesus as King and Ruler of a community organized to carry out his beneficent purposes—animated by his spirit—and manifesting their fealty to him by laboring to expand his dominions. While right emotions of heart ;--penitence for sin—love to God and man, are, indeed, the inner life, these must work themselves out in acts of beneficence like the King's—in the consecration of life and substance to the King's service in his conquest of the world.

This same idea is still more distinctly set forth in the great discourse of Judgment which follows the parables of the Talents and of the Virgins ; and which, indeed, may itself be called the prophetic "Parable of the Judgment ;"—wherein he presents the trial of the great issues of human existence at one infinite assize of all nations. Not only is it "the King" that sits upon the judgment-seat ; but all the acts that pass under review are considered simply in their relation as done or not done "unto *me*"—the King. For the six acts of kindness and charity enumerated, and made the test on which the awful issue turns, are by no means acts having in themselves some intrinsic virtue to constitute a merit—as cold legalism supposes. They have their value simply as a test of evangelical obedience. They are applauded not simply for doing the charities, but for doing them as unto Christ. And besides, there is immense significancy in the peculiar *form* of this test of discipleship, which is to apply to all nations and all ages of men. At first view, even after we have discovered that it is something more than what mere legalism

supposes,—even an evangelical heart-trying test—we must still perceive that, as a test of universal judgment, it is very peculiar in making the heart-test take this specific *form* of acts of kindness and charity to Christ's suffering disciples. Since, however, that form might seem a very practical one in an age of persecution, when it is all one's life is worth to confess Christ, or to sympathize with those who confess him;—and therefore the readiness either to suffer loss of all things, or to relieve those who thus suffer, would be the very clearest proof of one's sincere faith—still we feel disposed to ask, are the favored ages of the Church, when even her enemies seem at peace with her, to be left without any practical means of testing the sincerity of faith? Now when we come to examine into the meaning of this peculiar form, we find that so far from having exclusive or even special reference to a suffering and persecuted kingdom, in the discourse of which this judgment scene forms the practical conclusion, he had reference rather to a *working* kingdom, whose citizens had talents committed to them to be invested and accounted for. The meaning of the whole thing clearly must be, therefore, that the relation of every man to Jesus as King is the great question on which the issues of eternal judgment shall turn. Hence men shall be required to exhibit evidence of that relation by faith in him—the sincerity of that faith evidenced by deeds of loyalty to him, in aiding to carry on the enterprise which the King has at heart—namely, the relief of the wretchedness which sin has produced—and then these deeds tried by the amount of sacrifice we were willing to make in doing them. In this view of it, Christ's judgment-test is just the form of test to try the loyalty of a kingdom that now must suffer and now triumph. In the age of suffering and persecution, the loyalty of which this is the test makes men martyrs; in the age of triumph and outward prosperity, this same loyalty makes men propagandists.

Or, if we turn now to another of the most significant of Christ's teachings—the prayer which he puts into the mouth of every man who is Christian enough to pray, we discover the same principle. The very structure of what is called the Lord's Prayer brings out most prominently this idea of the relation to Christ as King, as a first impulse and instinct of a Christian soul. The natural selfishness of the human heart—even if under the impulse of helplessness and dependence it be driven to pray—would surely make the first cry to God a cry for daily bread and deliverance from evil. But Jesus teaches first to pray, "Thy kingdom come." And once we have the key furnished for the interpretation of this prayer, in this relation of Christ as King to his people, we shall see that this arrangement of the petition is no mere ingenious expedient to force his people to hold their selfishness in check, and teach them first to pray for others and then for self; but this is the natural order in which the desires of a truly believing soul spontaneously arise. Just as, in general, all true prayer has one of its chief grounds and reasons in a spontaneous impulse of the soul to cry to God, so this specific prayer, "Thy kingdom come," has its chief ground and reason in the spontaneous impulse of the believer to cry for the coming of his kingdom. As when the scoffer would puzzle him with the question, "Why needful to pray at all, since, according to your creed, God knows what you have need of, and is more ready to grant than you to ask?"—the believer's answer in part is, "Your cavil is founded on the total misconception that we pray *merely* for the selfish purpose of obtaining things needful to our comfort. But aside from such reason, we pray because, being His children, we feel like praying, as expressive of the communion between us and our Father. Prayer is the spontaneous impulse, 'the vital breath,' of a believing soul." So in like manner with this specific petition, "Thy kingdom come." When the scoffer asks, "Why pray so

absurd a prayer? Can the wildest enthusiasm ever hope to see this kingdom established among besotted heathen?" The believer's answer again is, "The cavil is founded on a misconception. The ground and reason of our praying thus is not merely that we expect thereby to get the kingdom established among the heathen. But aside from this reason—nay, aside even from the command laid upon us to pray thus—we pray this prayer because *we feel like praying it;* yea, we pray this first because it lies uppermost. The loyalty of our hearts, as citizens of this kingdom, spontaneously gives vent to itself, in crying 'Thy kingdom come'—'Thine is the kingdom, the Power, and the Glory!'"

This principle of his people as a community, and Christ their King, underlies the direction of Jesus and his promise concerning social prayer—"When two or three are gathered in my name," &c. His disciples are taught to pray in secret; but, at the same time, he gives a special assurance of his presence when thus gathered together—and when they "*agree* as touching what they shall ask." This meeting together is a recognition of their relation to each other as citizens, and to him as King. Even though it be a mere quorum of "two or three,"—the gathering shall be officially recognized as giving expression to the will of the citizens of the kingdom as such. For just as in that ancient kingdom of Israel which foreshadowed this kingdom of heaven, whilst Jehovah was sovereign of the Kingdom yet he was pleased to rule by the voice of the people; to give counsel when they assembled in solemn form to "inquire of the Lord," and to use as his agents for protecting the Kingdom those whom not only he designated, but whom, also, the people by their election called—so in the Kingdom of Heaven the sovereign chooses to rule according to the will of the citizens, and therefore gives special assurance of his presence to give counsel and to bless the means, when the people in solemn assembly agree, as touching what they shall ask of him.

It is this same truth which gives its peculiar force to the Apostolic commission and the promise—"Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." That commission is expressly grounded upon an antecedent truth—even this same relation between them and him as Mediatorial King. The ground upon which he sends them forth is not simply his natural omnipotence as God to protect them, but the power delegated to him—"given to him"—as mediator, to administer a kingdom. He says not, "All power is mine as God; therefore go, for I can protect;" but, "All power is *given me;* go ye *therefore*, teach the nations their relation to me as Mediatorial King, and admit them by baptism—*naturalize* them citizens of my kingdom." So that, by the very terms of the charter under which the apostles proceeded to organize fully the Kingdom of Heaven—even his Church—these two great truths stand forth as its fundamental principles—that the foundation of the organization is Jesus, the Mediatorial King; and that the end and aim of the Kingdom is universal conquest. And when we come now to study the structure of his Church under this charter, every element of its organization is in accordance with these expositions of its nature and end.

In every organization of society among men, whatever be its form—commonwealth, kingdom, or empire;—whatever its extent—whether some one specific community, or a whole race of men developing some peculiar form of civilization—we find commonly one great idea embodied in the structure, and one corresponding great end to which prominence is given in outworkings of the system. In the modern phrase, each such great community among men has a peculiar *missim.* Thus, Lycurgus undertook to organize a community upon the theory of war as the natural state of a country. Accordingly, the whole structure of the Spartan Constitution, as well as the whole outworking of the

Constitution in subsequent legislative enactments, looked to the one great purpose of training a nation of soldiers. So, in a still more general form of this truth, the Anglo-Saxon civilization. Whatever specific form of government it adopts, has also its one great idea, to wit, the personal liberty of the citizen individually, as distinct from the liberty of the nation;—a nation of *free men*, rather than a *free nation*. To this one idea all its peculiar legislative enactments—its Habeas Corpus Acts—its trial by jury, have especial reference. Now, in like manner, also, in this community, the Church which Jesus Christ has organized. Its one great idea is that set forth in this text—perpetual expansion. As it was the great aim of Lycurgus to educate and organize a nation of soldiers, so it is the great purpose of Jesus Christ, in the Kingdom which he hath founded to educate and organize an empire of *propagandists*.

This purpose is manifest, in the first place, from the spirit which he imparts to every citizen of his Kingdom, in the very act of naturalization by which they become such. It is the inevitable consequence of a true receiving of Christ by faith, that such believer shall feel an irrepressible desire to have others receive Christ as King also. No sooner shall the thirsty soul, hearing the invitation, come and refresh himself at the fountain of salvation, than he that heareth "shall say, Come." The penitent who has faith enough even to cry "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation," shall also cry, "Then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." The soul delivered by adorable grace from death to begin its new song,

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room?"

shall not fail, ere the song is finished, to sing also—

"Pity the nations, O my God,
Constrain the earth to come."

If once his soul is enabled to say,

"Jesus all the day long
Is my joy and my song,
And salvation through faith in his name:"

that soul shall not fail to wish also,

"O that all would believe,
And salvation receive,
And their song and their joy be the same."

Yea, just as surely as the mustard seed planted in the field shall, by the law of its nature, develop its tendency to unfold and expand into a tree, so surely shall the renewed soul evince this desire for the expansion of Christ's Kingdom.

Now, as we find the public spirit of the citizens of this Kingdom remarkably accordant with the expositions of its nature and purpose furnished by the Founder of the Kingdom, so we find all the ordinances and provisions for the outworking of the spirit of the Kingdom. As by the act of faith this spirit of enlargement is aroused in the soul, so the means of developing that spirit are provided for by the ordinance of worship. For he has appointed that, when they come together for his worship, to learn his will, and claim the fulfilment of his promise to be present with them, to guide them with his counsel and strengthen them by his grace,—they shall give outward expression at once to their gratitude, and their fellowship with him and all his kingdom, by acts of consecration of their substance to the uses of the kingdom. They who "continue in the Apostles' doctrine," learning more and more

of the truth as it is in Jesus, growing in knowledge that they may grow in grace, shall at the same time cultivate the feeling that they are in "fellowship" with the Apostles, and with all Christ's people. As in the other ordinances of his worship provision is made for giving outward expression to the inward emotions of the soul towards Christ as the deliverer from sin, and thereby cultivating and strengthening these emotions, so also provision is made in this ordinance of "the fellowship" for giving outward expression to the inward consciousness of the soul, of its relation through Christ to all that are Christ's. No law of tithes is ordained in the new Kingdom; no demand is made of any specific amount. His call is simply for the free-will offerings of each, as the exponent at once of the soul's consciousness of indebtedness "to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor" for its sake—and also of the soul's consciousness of fellowship or communion with Christ's great community on earth. These are all that he requires or will receive from his people. And the offering shall be acceptable just as it is the true expression of the soul's sense of relation to Christ and his people, irrespective of its intrinsic value. The mite of the poor widow—"all that she had"—is a nobler expression of heroic devotion, in the King's estimate, and worthy of more praise, than all the splendor of the temple. If it be the gift of some Mary who comes to give vent to the emotions of gratitude for a brother restored from the grave, that fill her heart to bursting —in the offering of her beautiful alabaster vase, the darling trinket of her maidenly pride—that gift shall not fail to touch the heart of the generous King. If it be the self-forgetting offerings of his pentecostal church,—even all their possessions laid at the feet of his ministers as the expression of their loving interest for their Master's cause, and their fellowship for all his suffering poor,—it shall be a blessed offering. If time and occasion served, it would not be difficult to show from the history of the Apostolic Church, and especially from the communications of the Apostles to the Church, that this expression of the fellowship (*κοινονια*) of saints by contributions for the poor, and other pious uses, was recognized and enjoined as an ordinance of worship, to be performed with the other acts of public worship, when thus gathered together in his name, according to his appointment.

From what has been already said touching the meaning of this provision itself for meeting together of the people for a common approach to God, it is manifest that such contributions for the purposes of the Kingdom, on such an occasion, are peculiarly appropriate, as the expression of the communion of those who meet thus as citizens of the Kingdom of Christ. It is one of the very discouraging signs of the times—not only in its bearing upon the work of Missions directly, but upon the piety of the Church at home—that in so great measure the "collection for the poor" seems to have fallen out of sight in the churches. That the expression of the fellowship seems no longer to be held obligatory as of faith; and the contribution, even when made, is made rather as a mere ecclesiastical measure, and on the ground of general philanthropy, than done as an act of worship in obedience to a Divine ordinance. Nay, that we hear not unfrequently expressions of dislike to the collection — even, indeed, scruples as to the fitness of an ordinance for the Sabbath worship which disturbs the sacredness of the day and the place—as they tell us—with the *jingle* of money in the house of God. It is surely not a favorable evidence for piety, when Christ-appointed ordinances are not deemed holy enough for his house. One is led to fear, that in such cases it must be that the associations of ideas on the subject of money, arising out of the transactions of the week, may somehow be unpleasant to the conscience. Whether the contribution for pious uses is of the nature of worship, can hardly be considered an open question in our branch of the

Church. It is such according to any clear and consistent interpretation of the New Testament. It is such according to the interpretation actually put upon the Scriptures by the Reformed Church, and especially by our standards. As the desire for the expansion of his kingdom is spontaneous in the hearts of the people, so in this ordinance provision is made of the means, in so far, for executing that desire; and in the natural and unimpeded outworking of the Church, the degree of provision thus made would become one of the most perfect measures of the Church's piety.

It is necessary merely to allude to the fact, that in accordance again with this public spirit and this ordinance of worship, is the provision for the administration of the Church. That in addition to ministers who labor in word and doctrine, "some pastors" and "some evangelists," (but both alike laboring to spread the truth,) and elders to rule—provision is made of a peculiar class of officers for the special care and administration of his revenues, which flow thus from the active faith of the worshippers, that they may accomplish best the purpose for which they are raised, namely: the expansion of the Church. That through the several courts, up to that which stands forth the representative at once of the will of the people of the Kingdom and the unity of the people, full provision is made of every agency needful to give efficiency to the desire of the people for the expansion, and to the means provided for the expansion of the Church.

Thus, in perhaps a much profounder sense than that in which it is often understood, is the proposition true—"The Church is a Missionary Society." Such, not by virtue of so resolving herself to be, but by her organic law, by the spirit of her members, by the nature of her ordinances, by the structure of her government. And just in so far as, in the structure and administration of any organized form of the Church, there is manifest adaptation to this great end of self-expansion, just in so far does such organization evince a conformity to the model of the Church organized by the Apostles. On the other hand, just in so far as any such organization is found wanting in the agencies needful for the Missionary work, and compelled to seek outlet for the spirit of the people through supplementary agencies, or agencies without the pale of the organization itself,—just in that far does it lack one of the essential elements of the Apostolic Church. As the Missionary spirit, in some form or other, is one of the essential marks of a true Gospel faith in the individual believer, so the having the agencies needful to carry into full effect the Missionary spirit of the people is one of the essential marks of the true Gospel Church.

There is room for only one or two of the many suggestions, by way of practical inference, from what has been said, which here crowd upon us:

1. The real prosperity and efficiency of the Church must obviously be just in proportion as these truths concerning the nature and end of the Church are clearly apprehended by the faith of her people, and their power manifested in her external life. Only while the Church feels this work of self-expansion to be the great purpose of her existence, can she be expected to continue pure and efficient. Failing to accomplish this end of her organization, she fails in fulfilling the condition upon which the special presence of the Great King is promised. For it is in connection with the command—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," that he makes the promise—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Failing of his presence, her ordinances become cold, formal, and barren; her barren ordinances the means of her speedy corruption of doctrine; her corruptions of doctrine the cause of spiritual decay and internal dissensions, that shall speedily leave her to the mockery and scorn of her enemies.

2. The work of Missions is not simply a measure of expediency devised by the wisdom

and piety of the Church in this or any other age of peculiar activity. It is the divinely appointed work which the Church has been organized to do. The doctrine of Missions is of *faith*, not of opinion. The cause of Missions addresses itself not to the benevolent sympathies merely, but to the conscience and faith of God's people. The most efficient means, therefore, of arousing the Church and keeping the Church awake to her duty in this regard, are not ingeniously-devised appliances for rousing the philanthropic sympathies of the people, and for reaching the treasures which their covetousness has hoarded away; but the simple exposition of the great truth of God relating to this work, for the enlightenment of their understandings and consciences: thereby awakening emotions of love for Jesus and his cause in their hearts, that will impel them to a consecration of themselves and their substance to his service. In this, as in every case, the simple truth of God, apprehended by the understanding and present to the consciousness of the soul, is the means which the Spirit uses for giving energy to, as well as for awakening the spiritual affections in, the heart. And so in regard to the revival of a spirit for this work in the Church at large. The truth of God is the agency which the Spirit will honor. It is not enough to devise wise expedients and machinery for this work—even though scriptural machinery, and then, folding our hands, sit in silence, waiting for the Spirit to come and stir up the people to work with the machinery. We must expound the truth—not our truth, but the truth of God—relating to the nature, the obligations, and the means of accomplishing the work; and cry earnestly to the Holy Spirit to give our teachings efficiency, in enlightening the understandings and enlarging the hearts of the people.

3. Applying these views to the history of our own Church in years past, we shall find much to mourn over—but, blessed be God! much also to rejoice over. Cause for mourning in that so large a portion of the Church is apparently even yet profoundly asleep on this subject; manifesting no signs of any consciousness of obligation to engage in this great work. Cause for mourning, that another portion of the Church, though apparently aroused, and putting forth some feeble effort in the work, is yet manifestly not truly awake to its high nature as the great work of the Church, and to the true ground of obligation to execute it. Cause for mourning, that as once more the whole world is thrown open as the field for the Churches, and the cry from millions is—"Come over and help us," so little can be done in sending forth laborers into the mighty field white to the harvest.

But there is cause for rejoicing also. Rejoicing that God hath been moving the hearts of his people more and more to engage in this work. That as they have engaged in it, their views of its obligation upon them have become clearer, and their views of the relation of the Church, as such, to the work have become clearer. That God hath so manifestly smiled upon even the inadequate efforts of our Church. That her faith has become stronger to struggle with the difficulties that oppose the work. That wisdom has been vouchsafed to those who have been specially charged with the work, to administer in such a degree skilfully, prudently, and in a manner to command the confidence of his people. Yea, that those have been raised up in the Church patient enough to bear the toil, and persevering enough to struggle with the difficulties that beset its administration in a church but yet half aroused to its solemn importance. That from the first assumption by our Church of her obligations as such formally to be in herself a Missionary Society, so much unity of action, unity of purpose, and mutual confidence have characterized her efforts in this work.

And we have reason to rejoice, in view of far more glorious prospects yet before our branch of the Church in the future. With an organization in all its details thoroughly

missionary; in a country whose national spirit and government is thoroughly in sympathy with hers; untrammelled by any alliances with, or hinderances from, the State; hemmed in by no barriers of national prejudice; hedged out from the nations of the earth by no Chinese walls of separation;—everything in her circumstances and position is more favorable to a noble experiment than perhaps in any age since the Apostles. What use shall we make of so lofty a position,—so glorious an inheritance, won for us by the blood of martyrs? Shall the sons of the men who died for the truth refuse to live for the truth? Shall the children of Martyrs feel it a hard service to be Propagandists? Shall the tree, sprung from "the least of all seeds," but watered by such blood, till it hath unfolded itself so beautiful and glorious in its majestic proportions, now go on to spread its gigantic boughs for the shelter of hungry and weary souls, flocking from every nation under heaven; or shall its life begin to die out, and it be rejected, a withered branch? He alone, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, can continue to supply the life. But He hath graciously pledged Himself in covenant to communicate, through the channel of the prayers of His people, the ever-augmenting supplies.